

REMARKS

Claims 1-22 and 24 are pending in the present application. In the Final Office Action mailed May 3, 2006, the Examiner rejected claims 1-22 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over New et al. (USP 5,916,465) and Stuart et al. (USP 5,338,917). The Examiner next rejected claims 1-22 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sorkin et al. (USP 6,380,508) in view of Stuart et al.

Regarding Applicant's Response dated February 16, 2006, the Examiner stated that "Applicant's arguments filed 2-16-2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive." *Office Action, May 3, 2006, p. 3.* However, the Examiner has not specifically stated in the present Office Action what claims stand rejected under the combination of Sorkin et al. and New et al. Applicant respectfully requests a clarification of the rejected claims under the cited references. Also in regards to the prior Response, the Examiner dismissed Applicant's arguments therein stating that, despite the fact that Sorkin et al. does not teach a pivoting torch head relative to the handle, "[o]ne of ordinary skill in the art would find it obvious to include a pivot joint in a torch" and that such an inclusion "merely comprises routine level of skill and not patentable subject matter." *Id.* Applicant respectfully submits that such a position cannot be supported without further evidence being proffered by the Examiner to support such a position.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-22 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over New et al. (USP 5,916,465) and Stuart et al. (USP 5,338,917). Contrary to the Examiner's assertion, Appellant respectfully disagrees that the art of record supports a 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of the present claims. The burden of establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness falls on the Examiner. *MPEP §2142.* To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. *MPEP §2143.* As will be shown below, the Examiner has failed to meet any of the three requirements for establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

The Examiner has combined the New et al. reference with the Stuart et al. reference, saying that the combination thereof renders the current claims obvious. The Examiner relies upon New et al. for “teaching a pivotable torch head in a TIG, plasma, torch.” *Office Action*, May 3, 2006, p. 3. In response to Applicant’s prior amendment to claim 1 setting forth that the handle of a torch body have a first end being fixed relative to a second end, the Examiner then cites Stuart et al. for “evidencing that a MIG torch, which does produce a plasma, can have an integral handle 64, which is attached to the welding head 71 via pivoting means enclosed in 70.” *Id.* at 2. Numerous factors point to the conclusion that there is no motivation for combining New et al. and Stuart et al. as done so by the Examiner, and that additionally, the combination of the references would not have a likelihood of success, at least not of the claimed invention.

First, were the New et al. reference to be modified with an integral handle as disclosed in Stuart, the torch head in New et al. would no longer be pivotable, rendering the teachings of New et al. ineffective. Referring to Fig. 4, New et al. states that “manual rotation of the front and rear handle portions 52, 54 respectively, relative to one another in one direction (e.g., rotating the rear handle section clockwise, aft looking forward, relative to the front handle section) causes the body 12 to move axially forward in the swivel housing 30 so that the forward end of the body compresses the spring mechanism 104 into substantial pressure engagement with the swivel seat 102 to lock the swivel member 74 in position due to friction between the swivel end and the socket and seat.” *Col. 3, ln. 62 to col. 4, ln. 4*. That is, New et al. requires rotation between a first end of the handle portion and a second end of the handle portion to allow loosening and tightening of the pivotable connection and to allow for rotation of the torch head. Applying an integral handle, as taught in Stuart et al., to the structure of New et al. would prevent such rotation between the first and second portions of the handle and thus would not allow for pivoting of the torch head to occur. As such, combining of the two references would render the benefits set forth in New et al. ineffectual. Were the opposite approach to be taken, there still would be no motivation to apply the teachings of New et al. to modify Stuart et al. Such a combination would only result in a welding torch containing two separate mechanisms for pivoting and rotating a torch head. Such a duplicative configuration would be deemed wholly unnecessary. Thus, it cannot be concluded that one skilled in the art would be motivated to combine the two references in either manner.

Furthermore, the combination of the Stuart et al. reference with New et al. would result in a configuration that is far different than that which is called for in the current claims. That is, the welding gun disclosed in Stuart et al. is for use in a MIG welding system, not a plasma cutting system as is called for in the current claims, and could not logically be combined with New et al. so as to teach the current invention. By comparing the welding gun shown in Fig. 3 of Stuart et al. to the plasma torch of Fig. 2 in the current invention, it is clear that the welding gun taught in Stuart et al. is wholly unsuitable for use in a plasma cutting operation. It is illogical to conclude, as the Examiner has done here, that one of ordinary skill in the art would find it obvious to combine a MIG welding gun, as disclosed in Stuart et al., with the disclosure of New et al. to teach the multi-position head plasma torch of the current invention. While New et al. and Stuart et al. may disclose certain elements set forth in the current claims, there would be no motivation to modify or combine the two references to achieve the current invention. A brief review of the Background sections in Stuart et al. and the current Application clearly points out the many differences between MIG welding and plasma cutting, and such is evidence of why one skilled in the art would not be motivated to adapt the elements of a MIG welding gun for use with a plasma torch. *See Stuart, col. 1, lns. 10-20; see also Application, p. 1 ¶3.* In the current invention, a torch head is shown in detail in Fig. 2. In plasma cutting, an air flow is commonly used to help start the arc and provide plasma gas to the torch. Positioned within a head portion of the plasma torch, is a movable or fixed electrode or consumable that serves as a cathode and a fixed or moveable nozzle or tip serves an anode. The air flow through the torch head is used to force a separation of the electrode and tip to create an arc. The arc initiates a plasma jet that is forced out through the opening in the nozzle by the compressed, the plasma jet causing the arc to transfer to the workpiece, thus initiating a cutting process. Comparing the structural requirements of a torch head configured for plasma cutting to the torch head disclosed and shown in Fig. 3 of Stuart et al. makes it clear that it is illogical to suggest that the pivotable conductor tube assembly 71 disclosed therein would be adaptable for use in a plasma cutting operation. *See Stuart, col. 6, lns. 7-10.* The Examiner is attempting to stretch what is being disclosed in the prior art to encompass that which is set forth in the current invention. Therefore, for all the reasons set forth above, Applicant respectfully believes that there is no suggestion or motivation to combine the cited references in the manner done so by the Examiner, nor is there a reasonable expectation of success to come up with the present invention.

The combination of New et al. and Stuart et al. also fails to teach or suggest all of the elements of the present claims. Claim 1 calls for, in part, a plasma cutting torch having a body with a first end fixed with respect to a second end, and a head having a restricted pivotable connection to the body for generating a cutting arc at a plurality of angles. The references fail to disclose a plasma torch having a body with a first end fixed with respect to a second end. New et al. discloses a first end of a handle portion and a second end of a handle portion, between which rotation is allowed to loosen and tightening a pivotable connection. Stuart et al. does disclose the use of an integral handle, however, this integral handle is part of a MIG welding gun, not a plasma torch. Therefore, neither reference specifically discloses a plasma torch having a handle with a first end fixed with respect to a second end. As such, Applicant believes claim 1, and the claims that depend therefrom, are patentably distinct over the art of record.

Claim 10 calls for, in part, a plasma cutting assembly having a plasma torch and a multi-position head ratchetably connected to the plasma torch. Applicant does not necessarily disagree that New et al. and Stuart et al. teach a torch having a head portion pivotably connected to a handle portion, however that is not what is called for in claim 10. Both references disclose a torch having a pivotal head assembly wherein a ball-and-socket type connection is used. When the ball and socket connection is loosened, the pivotable member is allowed to move freely and unrestricted in any direction and to any degree. There is no ratchetable connection between the head and the plasma torch as called for in claim 10. Accordingly, the art of record does not teach or suggest that which is called for in claim 10. As such, Applicant believes claim 10, and the claims that depend therefrom, are patentably distinct over the art of record.

Claim 17 calls for a plasma torch having means for providing restricted adjustment of a position of a work tip portion relative to a handle portion when the work tip portion is connected to the handle portion wherein the restricted adjustment limits rotation of the work tip portion relative to the handle portion along two axes. New et al. states that "[t]he swivel member 74 is rotatable 360 degrees in the socket 38 about the central axis A4 (FIG. 2) of the housing 30, and is also swivelable 30 degrees in the socket to position the head 70 of the torch 10 in a selected angular position relative to the handle 50 as shown in FIG. 5". *Col. 3, lns. 29-34*. Stuart et al. states that conductor tube 72 is allowed to rotate 360 degrees about the centerline of the handle 64 and to articulate approximately 15 degrees or more in a conical area. *Col. 9, lns. 11-22*. That is, when loosened, the connection assembly of both New et al. and Stuart et al. allow for unrestricted

movement of the head portion of the torch along all three axes. This is not what is called for in claim 17, which calls for rotation of the work tip along two axes. As such, Applicant believes claim 17, and the claims that depend therefrom, are patentably distinct over the art of record.

The Examiner also rejected claims 1-22 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sorkin et al. in view of Stuart et al. The Examiner stated that “one of ordinary skill in torch systems would have found it obvious to modify the Sorkin et al system” with the teachings of Stuart et al. for “clearly teaching that a pivotable head on a MIG torch can pivot 15 degrees from an axis, and can also rotate 360 degrees around such an axis.” *Office Action, supra at 3*. Similar to above, Applicant believes that there is no suggestion or motivation to combine Sorkin et al. and Stuart et al. to come up with the current invention. The welding gun disclosed in Stuart et al. is for use in a MIG welding system and does not teach or suggest a plasma torch as is called for in the current claims. Furthermore, were the two references to be combined, there would not be a likelihood of success, at least not of the claimed invention, as the teaching of a MIG welding gun in Stuart et al. would not be compatible with the plasma torch disclosed in Sorkin et al. The combination of the Examiner’s references in no way discloses a configuration as set forth in the current claims and cannot be said to teach or suggest a multi-position head plasma torch.

Additionally, the combination of Sorkin et al. and Stuart et al. fails to teach or suggest all of the elements of the present claims. Applicant has previously addressed the disclosure of Sorkin et al. in the Responses of May 2, 2005 and February 16, 2006. As shown in the figures of Sorkin, the torch includes a pivot 28 which is received in a pivot point 15 formed in a pocket 12 surrounded by the workpiece 10. During use, the pivot 28 and pivot point 15 generally cooperate to allow an operator, upon rotation of the torch handle, with the torch head secured thereto, to sever the tendon. Sorkin et al. in no way teaches the claimed plasma torch with a pivoting head. The head of the torch of Sorkin must pivot with the handle thereof. Furthermore, as stated earlier, Stuart et al. fails to teach or suggest the elements of the current claims as the disclosure therein is directed to a MIG welding gun, not a plasma torch. Stuart et al. also fails to disclose a pivotable head that is ratchetable or one that is restricted to two axes of motion. As such, Applicant believes claims 1, 10, and 17, and the claims that depend therefrom, are patentably distinct over the art of record.

Therefore, in light of at least the foregoing, Applicant respectfully believes that the present application is in condition for allowance. As a result, Applicant respectfully requests timely issuance of a Notice of Allowance for claims 1-22 and 24.

Applicant appreciates the Examiner's consideration of these Amendments and Remarks and cordially invites the Examiner to call the undersigned, should the Examiner consider any matters unresolved.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-2623. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by credit card authorization being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 50-2623. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extensions under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 50-2623. Please consider this a general authorization to charge any fee that is due in this case, if not otherwise timely paid, to Deposit Account No. 50-2623.